

AT A SPECIAL MEETING OF THE BOARD OF SUPERVISORS OF THE COUNTY OF MONTGOMERY, VIRGINIA HELD ON THE 27TH DAY OF MARCH 2008, AT 7:15 P.M. IN THE BOARD CHAMBERS, MONTGOMERY COUNTY GOVERNMENT CENTER, 755 ROANOKE STREET, CHRISTIANSBURG, VIRGINIA:

PRESENT:	Annette S. Perkins	-Chair
	Doug Marrs	-Vice Chair
	Mary W. Biggs (arrived 7:35 p.m.)	-Supervisors
	William H. Brown	
	Gary D. Creed	
	John A. Muffo	
	James D. Politis	
	L. Carol Edmonds	-Assistant County Administrator
	Martin M. McMahon	-County Attorney
	Angie Hill	-Financial & Management Services Director
	Karen Edmonds	-Human Resources Director
	Ruth L. Richey	-Public Information Officer
	Marc Mcgruder	-Budget Manager
	Vickie L. Swinney	-Secretary, Board of Supervisors

ABSENT: B. Clayton Goodman, III -County Administrator

CALL TO ORDER

The Chair called the meeting to order.

PUBLIC HEARINGS

Proposed 2008-2009 Budget

To receive citizens' comments with regard to the proposed FY 2008-2009 Budget

The Chair opened the budget hearing with an invitation for citizens to comment on the proposed FY 2008-2009 budget, explaining that each speaker would be allowed five minutes to address the Board.

Gerald Suttle, employed by the Department of Corrections, spoke in support for the New River Community Action, who plays a vital part in the re-entry program in Southwest Virginia for offenders who are being released from jail. This program has been offered in this area for the past six to seven years.

Jimmy Epperly, Chief of the Christiansburg Fire Department and Chair of the Montgomery County Fire and Rescue Commission, addressed the Board regarding funding for the Fire and Rescue Departments. They are answering 2,000 emergency calls per year and have a tremendous need to replace older, outdated equipment. The older equipment not only hinders the process of helping the citizens but also is hazardous for all the volunteers. Chief Epperly pleaded with the Board to help update the necessary equipment to keep their people safe. He thanked the Board for their support and commitment to Fire and Rescue. Chief Epperly asked those in attendance who came to support Fire and Rescue to please stand. Approximately 75 people stood in support.

Sid Bingley, Chief of the Blacksburg Rescue Squad and Secretary of the F&R Commission, addressed the Board regarding operational budget concerns and capital improvement needs for Fire and Rescue. Chief Bingley stated Montgomery County has been served by volunteer fire and rescue personnel for over 50 years. The Fire and Rescue Commission has had increasing concern with the lack of funds for the fire and rescue capital improvement projects. There are many vehicles in the fleet that are past due for replacement and some trucks no longer meet national safety standards and regulations, which may present dangers to the public and volunteers. Equipment replacement totals over \$6.5 million and will continue to rise every year. At present there are 6 pieces of large apparatus with 4 more approaching in the near future and 14 small apparatus up for replacement.

The Fire and Rescue Commission respectively recommends three options to help fund operational and capital needs. 1) Dedicate 3 cent of the real estate tax to fire and rescue; 2) A Bond Referendum is one option to replace aging apparatus; or 3) Lease Purchase Programs – This option allows the County to lease all 10 of the large apparatus for approximately \$1.2 million per year for 5 years with a \$1 purchase at the end of the 5 year lease.

The members of the Fire and Rescue Commission respectfully submit these suggestions to the Board with the understanding that creating and balancing a budget is not a simple task; however, they believe the issues at hand are detrimental to public safety and to fire and rescue's future.

Pug Wells, Chief of Elliston Fire Department, spoke regarding the need for capital improvement funding. Chief Wells provided information regarding the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) standards and the ISO ratings on fire/rescue equipment. Recent changes to these ratings affect how long they can use older equipment before they have to be taken out of use. Chief Wells asked the Board for their support in resolving their CIP issues.

Rick Weaver, representing the Montgomery County Principal Association, spoke in support of the proposed budget as presented to the Board of Supervisors. Mr. Weaver stated the proposed budget contains a school compensation package that is both fair and adequate; provides funding for outdated school facilities; provides funding to update school technical equipment, and continues support to meet the schools needs. He urged the Board to adopt the budget as proposed.

Steve Hulburt, a teacher in Montgomery County, spoke in support of the budget to increase school salaries. Mr. Hulburt explained he is on the interview panel that interviews prospective teachers. Everyone he will interview will have to take a pay cut to come to Montgomery County. He hopes one day Montgomery County can attract qualified teachers and not lose them to surrounding localities. As it is the best teachers will look elsewhere and Montgomery County will get the left over crop. They need to attract the best teachers and the proposed raise is a step in the right direction.

Norma Bull reminded the Board that the budget is not just about numbers but about volume. She believes the proposed budget is necessary to advance teacher salaries, which is an instrument in shaping our children's future. Ms. Bull stated it is a challenge to find qualified teachers and retaining teachers as they are leaving the system.

Sheriff Tommy Whitt spoke in support of the proposed budget. The Sheriff's Department requested additional funding beyond the basic request. Funding is requested to continue the three School Resource Officers' positions that will no longer be funded by state grant money, plus an additional SRO position to be used as a floater. He also requested funding to cover an additional Dispatch position. Funding is being requested to outsource inmates as there is a need to decrease the size of inmates to a manageable number. Sheriff Whitt also discussed the need to increase deputy's salaries in order to retain trained employees and not lose them to neighboring jurisdictions.

Dr. D. yielded his time to the next speaker, Robbie Jones.

Robbie Jones, representing the School Custodians, spoke in support of the proposed budget. Ms. Jones thanked the Board for their past support. She asked that the Board keep several items in mind when they consider adopting the budget. First, the increased cost of essential items needed to keep the school clean on a daily basis. Second, they are asking for two full-time employees needed in order to keep the Montgomery County Public School Facilities growing. Third, but not least, is salary. She addressed the need for increase in pay and the large turn over in custodian positions in the school system. The starting pay for a school custodian is \$15,000 and the proposed increase will be a huge jump for them. When Ms. Jones asked all custodians in support of the proposed budget to stand, approximately nine people stood.

John LeDoux expressed concerns with the proposed budget and opposes an 18% increase in the real estate tax rate. Mr. LeDoux stated he wrote a letter to the Editor of the Roanoke Times in April 08 asking that school funding be cut in order to keep taxes down. He also wrote a letter in 1998 to the same effect. In a matter of 10 years the School Board budget increased an average of 7% per year, from \$54 million to \$100 million. He urged the Board to have an external management consulting team to review how the County is managed. If it is run efficiently the budget can be cut by 20%, there are ways to find some savings.

John Tuttle spoke in opposition to the proposed budget. Mr. Tuttle questioned the 107% increase in the Board of Supervisors budget and the 700% increase in Special Contingencies. He also expressed concern with an 18% increase in real estate taxes. He understands the need for increased funding for public safety, as that should be the number one reason for government to protect its citizens, but at the cost of a \$1.2 million increase or 95%?

Clare Law, teacher at Margret Beeks Elementary School, spoke in support of the proposed budget. Ms. Law expressed concerns with teachers leaving the profession because they cannot adequately support their families due to low salaries, and how some teachers children qualify for the free lunch program. The children are our future and they should have teachers that are adequately reimbursed so they can provide the best quality care and education. She believes it is hard to hire new teachers and also hard to keep teachers. She stated she is satisfied with the quality of education in Montgomery County and loves her job, but we need to think carefully about where our values lie and education is well worth the funding.

Dick Workman opposes the proposed budget. Mr. Workman believes the proposed budget can be cut and asked that an external consultant review the budget. He asked the Board to clarify several request listed in the Budget and asked where these funds go, especially \$500,000 additional funding in the Board of Supervisors budget and \$1.3 million in special contingencies. He also expressed concern with the upcoming bond issuances for capital projects and wondered if the citizens can financially support this in a time of recession and increase in gas prices.

Supervisor Creed commented on the previous citizens' comments. The increase in the Board of Supervisors budget is for particular projects: \$250,000 to help upgrade roads; \$200,000 for a water study to determine if Montgomery County can join the Blacksburg-Christiansburg-VPI Water Authority; and \$50,000 for the Gypsy Moth Program. This increase is not for the Board to spend on what ever they would like, they are for specific projects only.

Jim Baldwin, Director of Development of the Brain Injury Services of Southwest Virginia, asked the Board for their financial support for their program. Mr. Baldwin noted they have requested funding for four years from Montgomery County and have not been approved. They serve 22 counties, 7 cities, and all 5 Planning District Commissions in southwest Virginia. They are asking Montgomery County for \$7,000 + to help support their budget. Mr. Baldwin explained the funding process is based on population and revenues from the state and pharmaceutical companies, and any amount from localities will help. They currently are serving 19 people in Montgomery County, where 64 – 75% of those 19 are working, volunteering, going back to school and returning something back to the their community. On average that percentage is only 25-34%, which shows how effective this program is in this area. Mr. Baldwin asked the Board to reconsider their request.

Susan Msyorga, Case Manager for Brain Injury Services of Southwest Virginia, spoke in support of funding for the Brain Injury Services. Ms. Msyorga provided information on the services provided to their clients and how these services have benefited clients in Montgomery County and how they now have the skill to return to work or school.

Mary Ann Hinshelwood spoke in support of funding for the Montgomery-Floyd Regional Library system. Ms. Hinshelwood thanked the Board for their past support and urged them to fund the public library system as proposed.

Michael Hemphill, a member of the Montgomery-Floyd Regional Library Board (MFRLB), thanked the Board for their past support. Without this support especially in the eastern portion of the County, Meadowbrook Public Library would not have been possible. The MFRLB has proposed a three year plan in order to increase the collection budget for books and materials. The collection is the life-line of the library system, the ability to buy the most recent books, movies, newspapers, etc. in order to stay current and properly serve the citizens. He urged the Board to fund the Library's request as proposed in the budget.

Stacy Martin, Certified Financial Planner in Blacksburg, expressed concern with the proposed budget. Mr. Martin wanted it known that none of his comments are directed toward the teachers, he agrees that the school employees need a raise. He thinks the low salaries of the school custodians is appalling. Mr. Martin believes that smaller government should be our goal. He believes there is a problem and asked what we could do to reduce our government. He suggested that instead of paying for studies such as the water study that the County use the many resources available in the community at Virginia Tech and local businesses to provide consultation. He also believes that the school system should have a use it or lose it adoption program. There are numerous vacant school facilities such as the old Christiansburg Middle School and old Blacksburg Middle School and all the other school buildings that will be vacated. This is prime real estate. He suggested the old Blacksburg Middle School be used for a business incubator for office space, which is hard to find in Blacksburg. This revenue could be used to offset the revenue for the County. Mr. Martin also suggested an endowment fund be created, which could relieve budgetary restraints. Finally, Mr. Martin spoke in support for funding to the Brain Injury Services. He stated \$7,000 is half of what it costs to keep the Riner Cannery open last year for 21 families. He believes that an 18% real estate tax increase is dramatic and asked where the money has gone. The school budget has increased but there hasn't been a substantial increase in student population.

Mike Reed understands that the majority of the budget increase is for the consideration of raising teacher salaries in order for them to be more in line with surrounding counties. Mr. Reed requested that the specific data on teacher salaries that is used to base the budget and tax increase on be presented to the public prior to any decision on altering the amount of the real estate tax rate. It is the citizens who will be responsible for shouldering these increases. He requested salary data on surrounding localities, not only on starting salaries but for experienced teachers as well. He believes that teachers should be compensated fairly, but in order to determine that he needs to examine the numbers. Mr. Reed stated that the real estate taxes have increased an average of 7% per year. These increases have slowly eaten into his family's financial wealth as he hasn't seen his salary increase on the same level. Mr. Reed expressed concern with the

housing market and the high reassessment value of homes in Montgomery County. He asked if now is the time to propose a 19% increase in taxes during a time of recession. Mr. Reed thanked the Board and requested that the information regarding the schools be given to the citizens to review and hold another budget hearing to discuss issues that are raised from that data.

Juliette Lewis spoke on behalf of the Friends of the Library. They deeply appreciate the support the Board of Supervisors have given the library.

Wendell Jones spoke in support of the School Board budget. Mr. Jones stated he is a parent, a citizen, and School Board member. He thanked the Board of Supervisors for their support and thanked the Law Enforcement for their efforts to keep their schools safe. Mr. Jones expressed strong support for funding the School Resource Officers in the middle schools. He also expressed appreciation to the fire and rescue personnel for their time. Mr. Jones spoke in support of increased hours for school nurses. More and more children are being medicated and they need highly trained and qualified staff to be able to make sure the children are getting the right medicine and right dose. He spoke in support of an increase in teacher salaries, stating they rank tenth in the local rank, which is based on like school divisions the size of Montgomery County. He commented they do not get the first or second choice teacher, usually they get the third or fourth choice teacher when hiring. Mr. Jones addressed the custodial salaries being below the poverty level. They do need to be paid better and urged the Board to support the proposed salary increase. He is concerned about the rising cost of fuel and utilities and unfunded mandates passed down from the state and federal government. He believes that more money is needed to be invested in the school system to educate the children now instead of the jails and prisons.

Phyllis Albritton, recently appointed School Board member, spoke in support of the proposed budget. She is just beginning to understand the depth of their need. Ms. Albritton commented that a Montgomery County teacher with 15 years of experience is ranked 8th out of 11th local jurisdictions. This is just one indication of the need in our area to increase taxes. She emphasized the need for education and stated that the future prison population is being based on children who cannot read at a third grade level at the end of third grade. Her deepest hope is that they can make a difference in the life of children so they will not end up in prison. Ms. Albritton thanked the Board for their support.

Chair Perkins at this time encouraged the previous speakers who had questions regarding the budget to submit their questions to the Clerk to the Board of Supervisors and the Board would address these at the next meeting.

There being no further speakers, the Chair closed this public hearing.

Advertised Real Estate Tax Rate-75¢ per \$100 of Assessed Value
To receive citizens' comments with regard to the proposed tax rate

The Chair opened the hearing on the advertised real estate tax rate with an invitation for citizens to comment on the proposed tax rate of 75¢ per \$100 of assessed value, explaining that each speaker would be allowed five minutes to address the Board.

Gary Hall spoke in opposition to the proposed tax increase. Mr. Hall expressed concerns with the proposed 18% real estate tax increase when there was a 10% increase in 2006. He questioned the County's needs for new facilities and suggested renovations of the older buildings instead. Mr. Hall urged the Board to find ways to decrease the budget.

Ray Epperly spoke in opposition to the proposed tax increase. Mr. Epperly, who is retired and owns rental property, expressed concerns with the amount of tax increase being proposed and how he will have to raise rental prices in order to recoup the higher real estate tax he will have to pay. He stated that people making minimum wage are not able to afford the rental prices now. Mr. Epperly stated he is lucky to earn 6-7% return on his rental property as it is. When asked that all those opposed to the proposed tax increase to stand, approximately 100 people stood.

John Matherly spoke in opposition to any tax increase. Mr. Matherly stated that the budget needs to be cut, as most citizens are cutting their budget due to the increases in commodities. He also questioned the empty school buildings. He thanked the Board members that do not support a 12 ¢ real estate tax increase.

Ernestine Weeks spoke in opposition to the proposed tax increase. Ms. Weeks stated she is speaking on behalf of senior citizens in the County. She understands the importance of requests from the various county agencies and schools and the need for a cost of living increase. However, with the rising costs of gas and food, she asked the Board to consider how a tax increase will affect the senior citizens. The majority of senior citizens can't afford to purchase their medication and food and will not be able to pay additional taxes. Ms. Weeks urged the Board to make sacrifices and reconsider tax increase.

Richard Workman spoke in opposition to the proposed tax increase. Mr. Workman stated that the reassessment on property increased property values an average of 33 % last year and the real estate market is dropping. Now is not the time to increase taxes. He stated that the affluent may be able to pay the additional tax but not the majority of the citizens. He urged the Board to review the budget and find ways to reduce it. He also questioned the empty school buildings in the County and stated someone needs to step up to the plate and do something.

Sharon Brockman spoke in opposition to the proposed tax increase. Ms. Brockman believes now is not the time to consider raising taxes with the increased cost in supplies, gas, and food. She thinks that the School system needs to cut their budget as any tax increase will be a burden.

Erin Bull, Vice-President of the Montgomery County Education Association, spoke in support of the proposed tax increase. Ms. Bull stated she was representing all school employees, not just teachers. She reported that the average salary increase for school employees was 2% last year. The starting salary for custodians and maintenance workers is \$15,000 and a family of four making \$21,200 is at poverty level. They are in the fifth year of a three year compensation plan and the proposed tax increase will help increase the compensation for everyone. Montgomery County is in need of competitive wages in order to retain and recruit teachers. Ms. Bull stated that teachers are only staying in the profession five years before leaving for other types of work. She urged the Board to adopt the budget as proposed.

Patricia Colatosti spoke in support of the proposed tax increase. Ms. Colatosti stated the Montgomery County real estate taxes are much lower than those in the metropolitan areas, such as Roanoke. She also stated that there are land use programs in the County for citizens to consider to help lower their taxes. She has 40 acres in the land use program in order to help lower taxes.

Angie Cornett, President of the Montgomery County Education Association, spoke in support of the proposed tax increase. Ms. Cornett expressed concerns with teacher salaries and the need to increase compensation.

Marie Morgan spoke in opposition to the proposed tax increase. Ms. Morgan said she realizes the need for salary increases for teachers and public safety; however, why give them a raise and then turn around and take it away by increasing their real estate taxes. She expressed concerns with the economy and the rising price of gas. She believes now is the wrong time to increase taxes. Ms. Morgan questioned the reason behind the School Superintendent driving her children to school in Blacksburg, how much is this costing the citizens? She also wanted to know what the \$4.3 million in school surplus money was spent on.

Gerald Hylton spoke in opposition to the proposed tax increase. Mr. Hylton believes the County needs to reign in on spending. He believes they are wasting money on constructing new state of the art buildings when a functional one will do instead. He stated the County can find ways to cut the budget. He believes a tax increase will be a burden on many senior citizens who are on a fixed income and have to decide to buy food or their medicine. Mr. Hylton also questioned the need for the many sheriff deputies and fire and rescue personnel that drove county vehicles to the meeting tonight. He asked why they couldn't drive their personal vehicles like the rest of the citizens attending instead of spending tax payers money on the gas to bring them here.

Wes Atkinson spoke in opposition to the proposed tax increase. Mr. Atkinson expressed concerns with the economy and a recession. He stated there are numerous houses for sale in Montgomery County and a real estate tax increase is not an incentive for people to purchase a house. He believes there is waste in the County and School System and that the Board of Supervisors needs to learn to say no. He agrees with the previous speaker regarding the number of public safety vehicles driven to this meeting tonight, especially with the price of gas. Mr. Atkinson stated he can understand a 6% salary increase but the budget will need to be cut elsewhere.

Dee Houchin spoke in opposition to the proposed tax increase. Ms. Houchin asked the Board how they can they explain such an increase to the senior citizens and disabled. There are many citizens who are struggling today and who can't afford a mortgage payment. She is concerned that the cost of living benefits for social security and disability is not increasing. Ms. Houchin also expressed concern with families of spouses who are deployed with the military who have lost their income.

Jerry Hoffman spoke in opposition to the proposed tax increase. Mr. Hoffman believes now is the worst time to raise real estate taxes. He expressed concerns with the housing market, with the increase in foreclosures, bankruptcies and cost of living. As a Social Worker, Mr. Hoffman comes in contact with the working poor, single parents and the elderly. He suggested ways of saving money, such as using bio-diesel instead of diesel. Mr. Hoffman spoke in support of funding the Brain Injury Services request, as he believes there will be an influx of veterans in the community that will be needing this service.

Roy Quesenberry spoke in opposition to the proposed tax increase. Mr. Quesenberry stated he built his house 18 years ago with the belief that he will live out his life there, he's 80 years old. He is proud of his home and keeps it maintained and landscaped. He paid \$100,000 to purchase the land and build his house and today the appraised price of his house is \$241,000. He believes the proposed tax increase will make it hard on those less fortunate. If the citizens are asked to cut back due to a tax increase then the County should find ways to cut back the budget also.

Earl Brown addressed the Board regarding the proposed tax increase. Mr. Brown believes we are in a recession; however, Montgomery County has grown and with growth comes increased needs and services. He does support a tax increase in order to support the needs of the County.

Larry Martin spoke in opposition to the proposed tax increase. Mr. Martin agrees with previous speakers that now is not the time to raise taxes. There is an influx of houses on the market being sold or foreclosed and the purchase prices are far less than the appraised values. He expressed concern with the Board's opposition to a business coming to Elliston that will bring in more revenue and help lower taxes. Mr. Martin questioned the proposed salary increase for teachers being \$3,000 or more. He urged the Board not to approve a tax increase this high.

Lawrence Kyle expressed concerns with the proposed tax increase. He agrees that teachers are grossly underpaid and need a pay increase; however, a tax increase is hurtful and harmful to the citizens of Montgomery County who are on a fixed income. The President of the United States is trying to keep this country from a recession and Mr. Kyle believes a high tax increase will be working against this. He stated there are needs in certain areas but urged the Board to increase truly what is needed and not what is wanted.

David Shelor spoke in opposition to the proposed tax increase. Mr. Shelor stated as a loan officer he helps people purchase homes. A tax increase will raise the tax base, which will make it more difficult for people to obtain a loan. Montgomery County's tax base is higher than surrounding localities. Mr. Shelor stated there is no need to raise taxes.

Chuck Richards spoke in opposition to the proposed tax increase. Mr. Richards expressed concerns that the real estate assessment in Montgomery County is higher than the property value. The County needs to find other means to increase revenue. He suggested that taxes on alcohol and cigarettes be increased instead.

Leon Linkous spoke in opposition to the proposed tax increase. Mr. Linkous expressed concerns with the School Board's \$1 million budget. He stated that the public never sees a line item budget, which is a concern.

Chester White, Jr. spoke in opposition to the proposed tax increase. He is concerned about the high assessment values of property in Montgomery County. He said his property value has increased significantly during the last reassessment due to construction of high dollar homes surrounding his neighborhood.

Mark DeBusk spoke in opposition to the proposed tax increase. Mr. DeBusk expressed frustration with the large percentage of land in the County that is not taxed, such as Virginia Tech, RAAP, and the National Forest. The County needs to find other means to raise revenue other than the real estate tax. He questioned why the County is discouraging businesses from expanding and offering to pay others not to locate in County. The County needs to encourage industries into the County to help offset the real estate tax.

Dan Olinger was educated in Montgomery County and one thing that was taught was responsibility. The proposed tax increase of 12 cents is not responsible and he opposes it.

Correen Meadows addressed the Board regarding the proposed tax increase. Ms. Meadows stated she is a teacher in Montgomery County and her husband is a Deputy but she is also a taxpayer. She can understand the need for an increase and the impact an increase will be on the citizens. She appreciates the hard and difficult task the Board has when preparing a budget. She suggested for residents who have questions regarding the School Board budget to attend a School Board meeting. Ms. Meadows asked that the Board review the proposed budget to see if any cuts can be made in order to keep the tax increase low. She also expressed concern with the high reassessment of property in Montgomery County and believes it is over inflated. She does support a small tax increase.

Billy Duncan spoke in opposition to the proposed tax increase. Mr. Duncan believes there is a lot of waste in the County and that there are ways to cut the budget. He suggested the County increase the sales tax by 1%, which should provide the additional revenue needed. This increase will impact all citizens in the County, not just property owners as a real estate tax increase would.

Supervisor Politis commented that the Commonwealth of Virginia will not allow the County to increase the sales tax, alcohol tax or cigarette tax. The State only allows the County certain areas to raise funds, with real estate tax being one. The Board of Supervisors has repeatedly requested the General Assembly to give counties the authority to increase other taxes in order to ease the burden of high real estate taxes.

Larry Linkous asked the Board to keep the real estate tax rate at a lower rate for a different reason than most speakers have addressed tonight. Mr. Linkous has been in business in Montgomery County for a long time and he promotes Montgomery County as a good place to do business. He is on numerous boards and commissions that meet with potential business owners that want to move to Montgomery County. One of the most frequently asked questions from potential businesses is "What is the tax rate?". He stated that homeowners normally require more services than they pay out, but businesses and industries increase revenues. We need these businesses and industries in the County and the proposed high tax increase is not a way to attract new them.

Dale Teel spoke in opposition to the proposed tax increase. Mr. Teel stated he is a farmer and it's getting harder every year to pay taxes on his land and a 12 cent tax increase will only make it harder. He also expressed concerns with the construction of a new courthouse. Mr. Teel stated he offered the County land for a new courthouse in order to get it off the little corner in Christiansburg and have some room. Apparently, the Judge was not interested in this idea. Mr. Teel believes the tax increase will put a burden on the citizens of Montgomery County.

Roger Lewis believes the problem lies in Richmond and the General Assembly. Local officials can't do anything else except put the burden of taxes on the real estate. This is not going to change unless we take a new approach and give up the political affiliations, both elected officials and residents, and form a non-partisan group and ask for other ways to increase local revenue, such as a 1% increase on local income tax on individuals, with a percentage back to the localities.

Eugene King opposed the proposed tax increase. Mr. King asked that the budget be reviewed and the necessary cuts be made to lower the rate of real estate taxes. He compared Montgomery County to Fairfax County, which is a metropolitan area and provides more services with only a 3 cent higher tax rate. He supports teachers and public safety officials; however, the Board needs to take into consideration the large amount of increase being proposed, especially after such a high reassessment.

Stanley Foulz spoke in opposition to the proposed tax increase. Mr. Foulz commented that he built a house 12 years ago in Pulaski County for \$149,000 and five years later built a second house for \$249,000. He is paying more in taxes now than he ever has. He is paying \$250 a month just in real estate taxes, no mortgage included. He is getting tired of his mortgage going up just to keep up with tax rate increases.

There being no further speakers, the public hearing was closed.

The Chair thanked all the citizens who came to address the Board in regard to the budget and the advertised tax rate. The Board of Supervisors heard their concerns, their complaints, and compliments, and they will assess every comment while working on the budget. The Chair also provided information on the budget process and explained that it is a long process and that many items are cut before the budget is presented to the Board. The County Administrator presents a budget that he believes to meet the needs of the County. The Chair announced a budget work session had been scheduled for Monday, April 7, 2008 at 5:30 p.m.

ADJOURNMENT

The Board adjourned to Monday, April 7, 2008 at 5:30 p.m.

The meeting adjourned at 10:45 p.m

APPROVED:_____	ATTEST:_____
Annette S. Perkins Chair	B. Clayton Goodman, III County Administrator